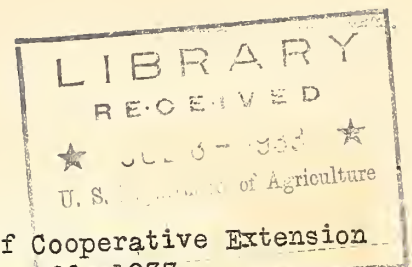


## **Historic, Archive Document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



X892892



A radio talk by J. A. Evans, associate chief, Office of Cooperative Extension Work, delivered over an NBC network, 10:30 P.M., Monday, June 26, 1933.

--o--

Within two weeks it is expected that the results of the great cotton referendum which starts today will be known and announced. The purpose of the referendum is, to find out whether the majority of some two million cotton farmers located in more than 8 hundred counties in 16 States are willing to accept the offer of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, to pay stated benefits to cooperating farmers who will agree to take out of production from 25 to 50 percent of their land now planted to cotton. Those who want the plan to fail, call it fantastic, socialistic and revolutionary. But much evidence has already been received tending to assure the Administration of its enthusiastic support by farmers generally throughout the entire cotton belt.

The objective of the plan is to reduce this year's cotton crop by from three to four million bales, by taking out of cultivation, 10 or more million acres of growing cotton. The power and resources of the United States Government put behind this plan, assure cooperating farmers that the promises of the Administration as to benefit payments will be surely and literally kept, if they perform their part of the proposed contract. Some of the reasons for proposing this startling and drastic course of action are:

1. That because of low prices for cotton the growers have since 1928 suffered disasters which are hardly parallel in the history of American agriculture.

2. That during this time, there have been piled up and now exists, on the farms of the South, and in the markets of the world, an enormous surplus of cotton, amounting to approximately 13 million bales. Enough, or more than enough at the present rate of consumption, to supply the entire world demand for American cotton, for another full year.

3. An increase in planted acres and favorable seasonal conditions so far this year, makes it probable that another large cotton crop of 13 to 15 million bales may be harvested this fall. The Administration, farm leaders, business men and progressive cotton farmers all realize that such a situation means increased hardships and disasters for the South if nothing is done. "Action and action now" to give some measure of relief has been urgently demanded, and is now proposed. The offer made to cooperating farmers is a plain business proposition, not only fair and equitable, but liberal. It is in effect a proposal to buy the cotton you could fairly expect to grow in an average year on 25 to 50 percent of the land now in cotton and pay for it as soon as this part of the growing crop has been destroyed. If cotton growers in sufficient numbers to assure the attainment of the objective, accept the offer, it would release one hundred million dollars or more to Southern farmers this summer, for a portion of the crop they could not otherwise sell until this fall. To take this referendum is an enormous task. The proposition must be presented and explained to practically two million cotton farmers. Seventy to eighty percent of such farmers, it is believed, must sign definite legal irrevocable offers to lease, the required 25 to 50 percent of their lands now planted to cotton, if the plan is made effective. The necessary inspection must be made to insure that the offers are based on fair and reasonable estimates as to yields and grades; necessary adjustments and agreements must be made with landlords, mortgage

(over)



and lien holders or other who may have a direct personal interest in any particular crop which is offered for lease, and all this it is planned to do within the next two weeks. I am recounting the appalling size of the task, in order to emphasize how necessary it is that cooperating growers and others interested in the success of the plan, give voluntary help in every way possible during the period of the campaign. This assistance may take many forms; copying reports or other clerical work; aiding farmers to fill out their lease offers; measure and stake out land for farmers and help and estimate its productivity; address meetings, and in many other ways. The point is that every one who wishes the plan to "go over" in the time set, should do his or her part to "put it over". It would in my opinion greatly hasten the work of committees if each farmer would select the land he desires to lease, mark it out conspicuously, so that it could be readily identified for inspection, satisfy himself by gin records or otherwise as to the average production on such land and verify his estimate of the acreage involved before he goes to the local committee to execute his lease offer. I should want in his place to have my neighbors assist me in this work so as to discuss with them my estimates and satisfy them, as to their fairness. There will be local committees in every cotton growing community of approximately three hundred farms. Volunteer teams in each community could assist farmers in posting and measuring land, and in ascertaining the other definite facts which they will need to make out lease offers properly and in this way speed up the whole campaign. Community spirit and pride should be invoked in order to bring about concerted effort, not only to secure a high percentage of community cooperation, but also to see that all offers to lease were based on estimates fair alike to both the farmers and to the Government.

Let me repeat, that it appears that it will be necessary that 70 to 80 percent of all cotton farmers sign lease offers on terms acceptable to the Secretary, before the plan can be put into effect. A lower percentage of signers than this, would probably not represent a sufficient acreage or baleage to accomplish the end sought and make it worth while to go on with the plan.

It is important for field agents and workers to emphasize this fact. In other attempts at acreage reduction or to organize cooperative movements many farmers at heart wishing the movement to succeed would not themselves join in it. They selfishly reasoned that by staying out they could enjoy the benefits of the cooperative movement, without contributing anything to it. This selfish spirit has retarded the progress and destroyed the usefulness of many farmer movements, which if whole-heartedly supported, would have been of great value.

It is the great merit of this plan that it rewards the cooperating farmer and leaves the non-cooperator to take the risks.

It should be pointed out to farmers of the type who are inclined to let others "hold the umbrella" while wishing the movement to succeed, that if they do not cooperate this time there will probably be no umbrella. It is up to you, Mr. Cotton Grower, not only to offer cooperation to the Government but to offer it on a fair, conservative basis. Otherwise your contract may possibly be rejected either by the local committee or by the Secretary. The Administration's sole purpose in making their offer is to make it possible through benefit payments to you, for you to help yourself, by reducing this year's cotton crop and the enormous carryover. It is not its purpose to pay you a dole, and certainly not, to pay acreage benefits based on inflated estimates either of yield or acreage. But you may ask, "How can local committees or the Secretary judge the reasonableness of an estimated yield on individual land?" The basis on which the Secretary expects lease offers to be made and benefits, if any, to be paid is average production of the particular land.



Local committeemen will all be familiar with farmers, their soil types, and customary yields in their respective committees.

Average production as a measure of benefit payments is believed to be fair to the farmer and fair to the Government. In many sections of the country last year drought or other seasonal hindrances reduced the cotton crop to far below normal. Good farmers on good land made but a third to one-half of what they were accustomed to make, on the same land. It would be manifestly unfair to expect such farmers to be willing to accept benefit payments for taking cotton out of production this year, on the basis of what the same land produced last year. In other sections of the country seasonal conditions were unusually good, and farmers made yields of cotton often twice as large as they could reasonably expect to get, on the same land, under average conditions. Manifestly in such cases it would be grossly unfair to ask the Government to pay these farmers benefits based on the production of their land last year. But the average production in normal years, or over a period of years, is fair in both instances. The Government has the official estimates of acreage planted to cotton and the actual number of bales of cotton ginned in each of the 820 principal cotton growing counties in the United States for the years 1928 to 1932. It is on the average acreages planted these five years that the tentative State quotas of land to be taken out of cotton production is based. It is against the 5-year average yield per acre of each of these individual counties that the estimate of yields per acre contained in lease proposals from each of the same counties will be checked. Of course, these are average yields of entire counties, and the individual yields varied widely. But, if 70 to 80 percent of the individual farmers in each of these 820 counties make lease offers, the average of their separate estimates, if reasonable, would very closely parallel the statistical average for the entire county for the last five years. If the average of all estimates from any given county greatly exceeds the known five-year average per acre for such county, it would certainly at least create a suspicion that the estimates had been placed unduly high for the purpose of securing unfair benefit payments, and such estimates would certainly be carefully investigated before being approved. It is hoped and believed that farmers everywhere will realize that the honor their communities and counties is at stake in this matter, and be willing, as the saying goes to even "lean back a little" in order to be sure that their yield estimates are not open to just criticism. The proposition of accepting or rejecting the offer of the Government and giving cooperation in putting into effect this plan for reducing cotton production should never be considered solely from the standpoint of one's purely personal, immediate profit. There is much more to your decision than this. There is also the question of your willingness to cooperate with all other growers for effective action for the benefit of the cotton industry and the whole country.

This will be the first battle in the great war which the President and the Administration are prepared to wage against the present unjust economic system and the awful conditions which they have brought about. A war to restore prosperity to agriculture and the rest of the Nation by increasing the purchasing power of American farmers. Because of the urgent necessity for action regarding cotton, you, Mr. Cotton Farmer, have the opportunity to be the first to join battle in this great campaign for a New Deal for agriculture. The eyes of the world will be upon you for the next two weeks. If you whole-heartedly accept the Government's offer and cooperate to make the cotton acreage reduction plan effective, that fact, when announced, will make headlines in every newspaper in the world. Such an announcement will have its repercussion on the price of cotton in every mart in the world

where cotton is bought, sold or handled, and it should have an immediately stimulating effect on all business in the South and elsewhere in the United States.

Your action in such cases will refute the long standing belief that cotton farmers could not be induced to work in unison for the general benefit of the industry as a whole. It will greatly strengthen and hearten the Agricultural Adjustment Administration in the further prosecution of its plans and it will stimulate producers of other basis products to also cooperate in plans for bettering conditions in their particular commodity. I feel assured, Southern farmers, that you have the collective "will to win" and that in cooperation with your Government you will win through your actions during the next two weeks a lasting victory over your old enemy "The Cotton Surplus". You could never have won by your unaided efforts.